# The Montana Library Network (MLN)

is a project of the Montana State Library, and the inspiration of the statewide multi-type Montana State Library Networking Task Force.

MLN works as a partner with Montana libraries to ensure the delivery of quality, standards-based, networked library materials and services to all Montanans.

Many states have or are building statewide library networks to improve the delivery of library materials and services.

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## General principles

- Libraries are now, and will remain, relevant
- Traditional library values (valuing books, knowledge, patron privacy, intellectual freedom, intellectual property) continue to be central to libraries; but must coexist with additional new values (see list, over)
- All Montanans require quality library materials and services
- Montana libraries (of all types) are linked by overlapping service communities, common needs, and shared activities
- Networked library materials and services supplement but may not necessarily replace traditional library resources
- Some library activities work best scaled-up to a statewide (or broader) level; consortia membership provides unique value for member libraries
- Standards boost quality and shave costs
- "Patron centered" means convenience wins out over quality
- Libraries are part of a populist global 'information sphere'; hence librarians are increasingly managing marketplace-like bazaars, not ivory-tower cathedrals of knowledge

## MLN current roles and projects

- Coordinates (with partners) statewide collaborative network planning
- Facilitates shared catalog project, link to "Montana Shared Catalog"
- Coordinates statewide OCLC and online information resource purchase, training, and use
- Coordinates training
- Promulgates standards
- Manages MLN Gateway

## MLN future roles and projects

- Partnering with Montana libraries, provide Montanans access to networked library services and materials, accessible when and where their patrons want them. This may very well mean cooperatively 'injecting' library resources into other entities online resources

- Continue to offer assistance to all types of Montana libraries

- Work with others to narrow the growing gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in our library community. There is a continuing need for the library community to secure ongoing material assistance to these least-advantaged libraries

- Foster participation in shared catalogs

- Sustain focus on networked library materials and services, directed by the State Library's long-range plan

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it." Alan Kay

# Montana Libraries in 2020: The World is Changing, Are We?

| The past… | The future… |
|---|---|
| • Library organized around a print collection | • Multimedia information sources (largely digital) gain share while print experiences modest growth<br>• Convergence of all things digital (book and non-book related content) |
| • Library materials acquired in anticipation of use<br>• One size fits all for organization and presentation | • Library materials acquired, and delivered to patron, when requested<br>• End-user, personalized, portal to networked library resources and info-space |
| • Library resources are limited to what's locally available<br>• In academic libraries, intermediated interlibrary loan (ILL) | • Library resources (content and services) distributed, not at one location; resources global<br>• Disintermediated interlibrary ILL from library and non-library starting-points |
| • Library resources are located in the library | • Library makes resources available (increasingly directly) at home, work, or school (networked info is everywhere)<br>• Distributed processing and storage |
| • Library is a building, a place | • Library is a diffuse collection of services and distributed content, not limited to a collection or a building |
| • The library is an important public space | • The library is an important public space, with an added virtual twist; growing emphasis on fostering collaborative behavior among users |
| • Librarians collect and organize | • Librarians create, analyze, collect, organize, and provide access (publish) |
| • Reference interview is (arguably) the highest library art; intermediated reference | • Library resources discovered directly by patrons (disintermediated reference)<br>• This design process represents (arguably) the highest library art |
| • Library school taught what was needed to run libraries (cataloging, children's services, reference, administration) | • Increasingly sophisticated, complex tasks require career-long training for acquiring a broad array of library, information technology, administrative, and political skills |
| • Catalogs access bibliographic records, based on card catalog model; costs grow predictably | • Catalogs are bigger, consortial, networked, more powerful; access lots more then books; same cost (but much more than many of us are spending now) |
| • What Internet? | • Internet is woven into libraries; libraries are woven into the Internet<br>• Libraries are networked, standards-based; libraries partner and interoperate with one-another and with non-library resources |

"Simple things should be simple. Complex things should be possible." Alan Kay